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Congress-CIA relation examined

By David Danford

It was not a Sherman Skolnick style expose of CIA involvement in the Kennedy assassination, big oil deals, and the Sack of Rome.

Wednesday's CIS seminar was a serious academic attempt to examine the relationship between the CIA and the congressional committees and executive branch groups which are supposed to monitor it.

The seminar, held in the Milliken room, was conducted by Michael McNamee '76, Norman Sandler '75 and David Tenenbaum '74.

The three political science students spent over a week in Washington during March investigating the CIA and its relationship to the Congress. They reported that, rather than having the CIA as "a tiger by the tail, Congress is, in fact, an unwilling hunter" for specifics about the operation of the agency.

Out of the poorly defined \$5 to \$7 billion annual combined budget of the nine agencies, including the CIA, which make up the intelligence community, the students reported that expenditures of less than \$10,000 are usually not reviewed by any of the monitoring committees of the executive branch. Sandler commented, "As Watergate has shown, \$10,000 can buy a lot and cause a lot of havoc."

McNamee said that the Appropriations and the Armed Services Committees of both houses of Congress which are to oversee the intelligence community are often co-opted by the CIA. "The committees are definitely stacked," said McNamee. In terms of the highly defense-oriented American Security Index, he described the committees as "such a collection of 100's as you have never seen."

According to the group, a further problem in legislative supervision of CIA operations is the lack of definition of the

bounds of the agency's power. "The language of the 1947 charter is so vague, it's hard to tell what exceeds it," said Sandler. Citing the Bay of Pigs operation and the secret war in Laos, he said, "There are no clear lines of accountability for anything that happens in the intelligence community. Successes usually have people accountable for them, but responsibility for failures is obscure."

"The CIA is a very large bureaucracy," said Sandler, "consisting of four directorates:

intelligence, operations, support, and science and technology."

McNamee said that despite its size, "The intelligence community and ex-intelligence community is a very tight knit thing. Everybody knows everybody else."

Sandler noted that their investigation revealed an ongoing debate within the CIA concerning which directorates should have highest priority. Suggesting an overbalance toward operations, Sandler said, "There are railroad cars full of raw informa-

tion that is not being evaluated. Further, he said that seven tons of secret papers come in daily to the CIA, while the shredding incinerating capacity is only five tons per day. Sandler suggested "They could perhaps tie the line printer directly into the shredder and maintain the same level of effectiveness."

The group's more serious suggestions included increasing the level of accountability within the CIA and getting Congress to take a more active role in oversight.